

King of the Underworld Chapter 331 - 340

Chapter 331

Sephle

That evening, while I was making dinner for the first time in what felt like months, the guys were noticeably happier. Being at the house wasn't just good for me, it was good for all of them, too. We were able to relax, away from everyone else. We didn't need to worry about being overheard during any conversation. The house staff was minimal and they were all gone by the end of the day. The guards outside stayed outside and they always stayed far enough away from us that they couldn't overhear our conversations when we were outside. It had become the spot where we could get away from everything going on and just be ourselves.

While the guys were excellent at their jobs, they needed down time too.

Where they didn't need to worry about some random person trying to get Adrik. Or me. No one knew about the house. I felt safe around the guys, but they felt safe at the house.

Viktor had brought his computer into the kitchen while I was cooking, but I made him put it away. "One night, Papa Bear. One night with no work. Or at least until dinner is over. You all need a break," I said, pulling the ingredients for dinner out of the refrigerator. He started to argue with me, but I made my eyes go dark and stared at him.

"I don't know how i feel about your demon eyes, sestrichka. I know you're just doing it to be a shi t, but you do look scary," Viktor said, his deep belly laugh filling the kitchen.

“That’s kind of the whole point, Viktor,” I said in a very loud whisper, making him laugh even more. His loud laugh was one of my favorite sounds.

Adrik was close by, leaning against the counter, his arms crossed across his chest. Misha was helping me, Andrei was also close by, ready to jump in when I needed him. Ivan and Stephen were across the island, laughing and talking with Viktor. I caught myself looking at everyone and couldn’t help the smile that stretched across my face. Adrik walked up behind me, kissing my neck softly. “What are you smiling about, solnishko?” he asked quietly.

“This really is the best day ever. We all needed this today,” I said, turning toward him so I could look at him. He looked relaxed and happy as we all laughed and talked in the kitchen.

“We needed a reason to celebrate,” he said, pressing his lips against mine gently.

They all talked more during dinner than they had in a while. It was obvious that they were all more relaxed than they had been since Ivan and I were taken. I knew the guys were stressed to see me hurt again, but I didn’t realize just how stressed they’d been over it. We’d all had to deal with quite a lot over the last few weeks.

Later that night, once Adrik and I were alone, he brought it up as well. “I had us come here because I knew it would help you, but I think it helped all of us,” he said, taking his shirt off and putting it on me for the night.

“You noticed too, huh?” I asked, watching him while he buttoned up his shirt on me.

He nodded his head. “You’re lighter, but I think everyone is lighter too. I knew the guys were getting stressed, but I didn’t realize just how stressed they were.”

“They’ve been too busy babysitting me,” I said, grinning up at him.

He wrapped his arms around my waist, pulling me tight against him. "Don't apologize for that, either. They would happily do it again. They like babysitting you more than pretty much anything else they have to do. You didn't hear the argument that happened when we made their rotation schedule after the meeting with Henry," he said, smirking at me.

"They argued? Why would they argue?" I asked.

"There's an odd number of them. There's an even number of hours in the day," he said, clearly still amused at the memory.

"Shut up."

"No, it's true. They argue like children sometimes," he said, laughing.

"I happen to love it about them. I always wanted to know what it was like to have brothers. Now I know," I said.

"You're biased, though, solnishko," he said. "You love them no matter what. And it's usually you that they're fighting over. I sometimes have to remind them that you're mine."

I tried not to laugh, but I couldn't hold it in. It was just such a funny picture in my head to think about. "I don't want to cause problems between all of you," I said. While he was also amused at it, I never wanted him to feel like there was any reason to feel jealous. For any reason. He was becoming much more sensitive to my moods shifting, so he picked up on my worry right away as he looked into my eyes.

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"It's not a problem, Sephie. You shouldn't worry. They're big boys, Mostly. Just as long as I get the most time with you, they can fight as much as they like," he said, his sexy smirk making me feel the warmth spread over my body.

"I love them all, but not like I love you, Adrik," I said. When I would think about how much I loved him, the warmth that spread

through my body was a low-level rise in temperature. The warmth that was spreading over my body now was a raging inferno, but I knew it was mine and not coming from him. I inhaled sharply, looking up at him. I saw the surprise in his eyes, followed immediately by lust.

“Blink, love,” he said. He was surprised to see my eyes go dark. I knew he could feel my warmth, but I wasn’t sure he was feeling it at the level I was yet. I put my hands on his chest, trying to push the fire that was building inside me to him. I looked at him, chewing on my bottom lip.

“No.”

He raised an eyebrow, but looked away. I knew he was struggling to control himself, especially since my eyes were dark. I put my fingers under his chin, forcing him to look at me again. “Sephie...” he said. I could hear the uncertainty in his voice. His hold on my waist was loosening, like he was fighting keeping me close and stepping away from me for fear of hurting me.

smiled at him, trying to keep my eyes as dark as possible. He cursed under his breath. “I don’t know if I can control myself, solnishko,” he said.

“Then don’t try,” I said as I ran my hand up his chest to the back of his neck. I pulled him down to me, my lips crashing into his. I felt his hands slide under his shirt to my bare skin. His touch was leaving a trail of fire across my skin. I knew I wouldn’t be able to hold back either. While I was still wary of being able to catch my breath, I couldn’t wait any longer.

His lips moved down my neck, making me moan quietly. “I’ve missed this so much, Sephie,” he said. He ran his hands down my back to my ass, picking me up. I wrapped my legs tight around him. My lips found his once more. I started to unbutton his shirt I

was wearing as he held me up. I was desperate to feel his skin against mine. I let his shirt fall to the floor, my arms clinging to him once again.

He walked us toward the bed. He leaned his head back, so he could look at me. "Are you sure about this, love?" he asked. I could tell my eyes were definitely still dark by the look in his eyes. Seeing how much he wanted me made me want him even more.

"Positive," I said. I wasn't sure I would be able to hold myself back at this point.

"You have to tell me if you have trouble catching your breath. I don't want to scare you and I don't want to hurt you," he said, still uncertain.

"You won't," I said against his lips. That was all he needed to hear. He quickly climbed on the bed, with me still wrapped around him, so he was on top of me. His lips left a trail of fire down my neck, his hands burning my body with desire. I saw the look of satisfaction as he ripped my panties off. couldn't help but laugh. "You've been waiting for that, haven't you?" I asked,

He groaned. "For so long," he said, kissing my stomach. I ran my hands through his hair, enjoying the feeling of his facial hair tickling my stomach. He sat up on his knees, his hands on the zipper of his pants. "Okay, last chance. You're really sure you're okay?" he asked.

Chapter 332

Chapter Three Hundred Thirty-Two

Sephie

I sat up in front of him, smiling at him I knew he was worried I was going to scare me if I couldn't catch my breath again. I moved his hands out of the way so I could unzip his pants, pushing them down as far as I could I pushed him onto his back so I could pull his pants all the way off. He sat up, pulling me into his top. "This will help me keep control of myself," he told as his fingers ran lightly over my breasts, down my neck. "And I can see your eyes," he said, groaning when I tried to make them go darker. Clearly that worked.

He grabbed me, pulling me against him as tight as possible. His breath caught as I pushed my hips into his. He was using every bit of self control that he had to go slow as he slid inside me. I moaned loudly, completely lost in feeling him fill me up. I looked at him as I started to move my hips against him. I saw a flash of surprise as he looked into my eyes. "Keep looking at me," he said, almost like it was an order. I found myself oddly turned on. His hands framed over my body, still igniting a fire beneath them. He couldn't take his eyes away from mine. He was completely mesmerized by what he was seeing. I had no idea how much my eyes being dark would captivate Mith. I could feel myself building, getting closer and closer to the edge. My breaths were fast and heavy, but I didn't feel like I couldn't catch my breath. I wanted more. I put my hands on his chest, pushing him down. Once he was flat on his back, I rolled him over so he was on top of me, my legs wrapped around him. He slammed into me hard one time, causing me to moan loudly. He waited to see how I

reacted and whether I could catch my breath, then slammed into me again. I moaned again, grabbing his ass, and pulling him into me. His thrusts became harder and faster as I felt myself inching closer to the edge.

He stayed above me, intent on watching my eyes the whole time. He was completely enchanted by whatever it was he was seeing. I felt my orgasm start and I leaned my head back, closing my eyes for a moment. "No, don't. Look at me. Please," he said, almost begging. I opened my eyes again, looking at him as I felt my body explode in extreme pleasure. All my pain was gone. There was only him.

In the way that only he could, he drew my orgasm out as long as possible, but his gaze never left my eyes. It was a new level of intensity for me, like

he was seeing all of me for the first time. I felt myself begin to come down, but just when I thought it was over, he thrust hard into me again, causing another round of pleasure. This time, I could feel him getting closer as well. He had told me before I was taken that I was able to basically share my orgasm with him, letting him feel what I felt, which made it infinitely more intense for him. With him maintaining eye contact with me for so long, it was at a new level of intensity for me. I tried to be as open as I could, letting him feel everything I felt. No holding back. As soon as he felt another orgasm start for me, he let go as well, exploding into his own wave of pleasure.

I reached up, holding his face in my hands and pulled him to me, kissing him gently. He rolled off me, pulling me with him so I could lay across his chest as we both worked on catching our breath. I gladly snuggled into him. His hand ran lightly over my

back. "You're amazing, Sephie," he said. I chuckled, hugging him tightly. "Did you know what you were doing with your eyes?" he asked.

I rested my chin on his chest, so I could look at him. "I'm going to say no, since I have no idea what you're talking about. They were just dark weren't they?"

He laughed. "No. Well, yes. They were dark, but they were constantly changing colors. When your eyes go dark, it's like the brown takes over and gets almost black. But the other two colors did it too this time. I've never seen it before. I could see the black fade away again like I did the other morning and your normal eyes come back too."

"Now I know why you couldn't stop looking at my eyes the whole time," I said, smiling at the look of wonderment that was still on his face.

"I didn't want to miss anything," he said, smiling shyly. He brushed a curl from my face. "How's your lung? You didn't struggle to catch your breath?"

"It's fine. I didn't struggle at all, which bodes well for next time," I said, grinning at him.

He wrapped his arms around me, holding me tightly. "I've missed you so much, solnishko."

I woke Adrik up a few times during the night. I knew he'd been missing me, but I really didn't realize how much I'd been missing him. Once the morning arrived, neither of us was ready to wake up. I felt his hand rubbing my back lightly when I woke up once more to see daylight streaming through the windows. I lifted my head, resting my chin on his chest. He opened his eyes, smiling

at me. "Good morning, love," he said sleepily. He reached up, brushing the curls from my face. "I've missed you sleeping on my chest. I think I slept better last night than I have in weeks."

"It couldn't possibly be due to me wearing you out every two hours," I said, grinning at him.

"That did not hurt," he said, his hands running down my body.

"Worth H," I said, "I feel like I'm finally warm again. I've been cold since they took me and Ivan."

"You have been freezing. I think that's partly why you haven't been able to sleep without someone next to you. It's hard to tell if the shaking was your normal reaction to trauma or because you were cold," he said.

"Probably both. I hate being cold "

"I noticed," he said, grinning at me. He pulled me completely on top of him, holding me tightly. I groaned when I moved, feeling sore from our nighttime activities "Are you just sore or did I hurt you?" he asked.

"Sore Gloriously sore," I said, burying my face in his neck I felt his body vibrate as he laughed at my answer. He rolled over so he was on top of me. "Would a hot shower help" he asked. His boyish smile across his face. He was clearly happy that he was the reason for me being sore, which made him even more handsome than usual I caught myself just thinking about how much I loved every detail of him. His breath caught. "Do that again," he said

"Do what again?"

"You just made your eyes go completely blue."

"I did?" I asked, completely surprised.

He nodded his head. "What were you thinking about just now?"

I smiled shyly at him. "How much I love every detail of you."

I saw the look of surprise on his face. "They did it again. Instead of going dark, they're completely blue." He watched for a few more seconds, then said, "they just changed back to normal. The same way it happened when they're dark. That's what they were doing last night too."

"Who needs a mood ring when you have ever-changing eye colors?" I said, laughing. This was a new development for me. I was only just beginning to be able to tell when my eyes would go dark, much less that they completely changed colors now.

Adrik cursed under his breath, but he looked completely hypnotized by my eyes once again. He leaned down and kissed me gently. "You never cease to amaze me," he said. "Come, let's shower. You're not allowed around anyone else when you smell like s*x."

"Bossy," I said as we walked toward the bathroom. He stopped and looked back at me, as seriously as he could. "I'll allow it," I said, laughing. I grabbed his hand as we continued into the bathroom. I put my chin on his shoulder, whispering in his ear, "I kind of like it." I laughed again when he cursed under his breath as he walked us into the shower, turning the water on, then turning to me and pulling me tight against him

Chapter 333

Chapter Three Hundred Thirty-Three

Sephie

Once we tested the limits of the hot water supply with the excessively long shower, he was thoughtful as we were getting dressed. “I don’t want to tell the guys about your eyes i ing colors this time,” he said, very matter of factly.

I smiled at him as I was finally taming my hair on my own again. I walked over to him, placing my hands on his chest. I knew there was more to his request that he wasn’t saying. I searched his eyes for just a moment before finding the answer to my silent question. Since he told me they’d changed colors when I was thinking about how much I loved him before, I tried to make it happen again. I knew he was fine with me being around the guys, but with me being hurt for so long, plus Misha and Andel relying on me a little more than usual because of everything else going on, I think Adrik was starting to feel slightly jealous and protective of our relationship. It was etsy to think about just how much I loved him as I looked up at him. I could see the smile stretch across his face and I knew my eyes had changed once again. “It’ll be our little secret,” I said. He pulled me to him, wrapping his arms tightly around me. I knew he loved not having my giant cast in the way just as much as I did now. “What color were they this time?” I asked as I rested my head against his chest. “Blue again.”

“Blue apparently means love for my mood ring eyes,” I said. “Is it the normal blue that’s always there? It just takes over the other two colors?”

“Basically. The blue that’s always there isn’t a normal blue eye color. It’s a much deeper blue. Like deepest depth of the ocean

blue. It's incredible. Not like my eyes that are normal blue," he said.

I laughed, looking up at him. "Your eyes are deeper blue sometimes. Mostly when you're having dirty thoughts about what you want to do to me."

He smirked down at me. "It's still not the same. It's not a complete color change. Yours is a complete color change."

I giggled. "It's my warning system." He laughed loudly. It was music to my ears, I grabbed his hand as we left the bedroom. "You have to tell me if my eyes are doing their own thing in front of other people. I'm only just now beginning to get a handle on when they go dark and they still surprise me with it sometimes. I had no clue they were coming up with even more tricks, but given that it seems to happen either when we're having s*x or I'm thinking about how much I adore you, I think I can keep it under wraps."

He stopped and pulled me back to him, a small smile on his lips. "I like having parts of you that are just for me," he said.

"I know you do. I do too. I just need help making sure this one stays quiet. I can't tell when it's happening yet. I also need to figure out a way to keep Andrei from fishing around in my head and finding it," I said. I chewed on my bottom lip as I thought about his newfound abilities.

Adrik kissed my forehead before continuing down the stairs. "Have you talked to him about turning it off yet? Like when you're around Stephen?" he asked.

"No, I haven't. I need to. Maybe I can find time today to get him by himself and have that conversation with him," I said. "But I think on some level he likely already knows. He's more discreet than you think. He's known about Ivan's past longer than I have."

Adrik stopped on the stairs, turning toward me. He was clearly surprised to learn this bit of information. "How?" he asked.

below me, I put my arms around his shoulders, running my hand through his still damp hair.

quietly. Since he was on the

“He said he figured it out a few years ago. He heard Ivan talking in his sleep one time after he got hurt. It wasn’t a time when he had to go to the hospital, but he said even just getting hurt used to bring Ivan’s demons back. He said everybody else was asleep, but he couldn’t sleep and he heard Ivan talking. He doesn’t know everything, but he knows enough of the details that he knows he really doesn’t want to know the rest,” I said.

“He never told anyone,” Adrik said, still surprised. His hands were holding my hips as he thought about what I’d just told him.

“Ivan doesn’t even know. He told me he knew how private Ivan was, so he just never brought it up. But it helped Andrei be more understanding when you guys would have to fight him in the hospital. He saw how much it affects Viktor. Even still, Viktor struggles with it,” I said.

“Viktor takes it personally. Those two have been with me the longest, therefore they’re the closest. I think he takes it as an insult that Ivan can’t see him when he’s in the hospital.”

goes, not much like Ivan couldn’t understand the pain Viktor went through when he lost his wife and child, Viktor can’t understand the pain that Ivan went through when he was at that facility. He should be glad for that fact, honestly. Ivan’s seen evil to a level that not many people have. Or should I thought for a moment, still running my fingers through Adrik’s dark hair. “But from Viktor’s point of view, Ivan is one of the people Viktor loves most in this world and Viktor shows his love through helping people, with whatever they need. Viktor feels rejected, even though it’s got nothing to do with him and everything to do with Ivan’s past.

Because of Viktor's past with his wife, he clings to the people he loves. Maybe more than he should, but understandable. He might be a giant and look like he could kill you with his mind, but Viktor is incredibly sensitive underneath that menacing exterior.

When he finds another woman that catches his eye, I will murder her if she takes advantage of that."

Adrik looked at me, smirking, when I said the last sentence. I recognized the look in his eye and knew my eyes had changed. I

raised an eyebrow, silently asking what color they were this time. "Demon eyes for added emphasis," he said, laughing.

"These things are going to get me in so much trouble," I said as we continued down the stairs.

We could smell breakfast cooking as we walked to the kitchen. All the guys were already in the kitchen, working together to make breakfast for everyone. "You guys are making breakfast?" I asked as I walked into the kitchen. They all looked to me and Adrik, obviously proud of themselves.

"We didn't want you to overdo it again, so we thought we'd take care of breakfast to keep you from feeling like you had to," Ivan said.

"You're still not completely healed, which means you're still at high risk of getting pneumonia again," Stephen said.

"And none of us want you to have to go back on antibiotics or start sleeping all the time again," Viktor said.

"Because it's so0000 boring without you around all the time," Misha said, in the overly dramatic way that only he could.

*This

might make us regret our decision to not order out, but it's the thought that counts, right?" Andrei said, grinning at me.

I looked at Adrik, who was also amused at their decision, as well as their explanation. I smiled at all of them. "I'm so impressed."

"Maybe reserve judgment until after you try it," Stephen said.

"Nah, Andrei was right. It's the thought that counts," Adrik said.

After breakfast, which was actually quite good, I went with the guys to the gym. I still wasn't allowed to do anything yet, but at least they let me tag along. I wasn't going to turn down the opportunity to watch Adrik get sweaty from lifting heavy things.

Andrei took the opportunity to do some very light exercises with me to help my shoulder. We'd been doing small things, even before I got my cast off. Since it was the only thing I could do, I was happy to continue. It also gave me a few minutes mostly alone with him. We were far enough away from the other guys that I brought up the subject of turning his newly discovered gift on and off.

"So, I feel like you already know this, but I also feel like we should discuss turning your newfound ability off around certain people. Like Stephen, who is very clearly uncomfortable with our ability to see inside his head. You don't want to be rude about it," I said, as he helped me with my exercises.

"I know, spider monkey," he said, smiling at me. "This is about me figuring out you were scared, isn't it?"

King of the Underworld

Chapter 334

Chapter Three Hundred Thirty-Four

Sephie

“Kind of. Adrik appreciates you and Misha talking me into telling him about it,” I said. I took a deep breath, looking at him. “He’s always been fine with me being around you guys and I never want that to be an issue. With me being hurt for so long this time, he’s feeling a little jealous at having to share me with everyone for the first time. But at the same time, he’s also excited that you’ll be able to catch the things I can still get past him. It’s complicated “ Andrei glanced around, then put his hand up to stop me from saying more. “You don’t need to explain it to me, spider monkey. I don’t want to cause problems. Like you leveling up Misha, I think it works best with you right now, but that’s just because I need more practice. I’ll make sure Boss knows I won’t be nosey,” he said, smiling at me.

“I did tell him he shouldn’t worry too much about you, since you’ve known about Ivan’s past longer than I have.” It was my turn to glance around to make sure we were still far enough away from everyone else that we wouldn’t be overheard. “I am slightly worried about Stephen when it comes to both you and 1. He’s very nervous about us finding out anything he doesn’t want us to know. I don’t want to make that worse,” I said.

“I did notice that. I’ve tried to assure him that I’m not going to drop in his head unannounced,” he said.

“He’s definitely one that needs to come around in his own time. I think he’ll tell us whatever it is eventually, but I don’t think it will go well if he’s forced to have to tell us something he’s not ready to,” I said. “You mean the way you’ve been forced to tell us everything you didn’t want to before you were ready?” he asked, giving me a sly

smile.

Yeah, I wouldn't recommend it. I mean, it's effective, but it hasn't been ideal,"

I said, taking a deep breath. "Also? Can we talk

about how frustrating it is for these simple exercises to make my shoulder

hurt this much?" I noticed Adrik on his way to us and

wanted to change the subject before he made it all the way to us.

"Your shoulder is still healing, spider monkey. It's a delicate balance of taking it easy and challenging it enough that it keeps

getting stronger," he said, looking at me apologetically.

"Is she complaining she can't do much still?" Adrik asked Andrei as he

walked toward us. He walked to me, still breathing heavier

than normal from his last set, the beads of sweat prominent on his forehead.

He caught me staring at him, my mouth slightly

open, as he walked to me. His sexy smirk on his face, I felt the pull in my

chest that meant he was thinking about how much he

loved me. He slid his arm around my waist, pulling me to him so he could kiss

my temple. My mind wandered to the night before

and how I still felt like I couldn't get enough of him.

"She might be," Andrei said, laughing. "But I'm guilty of doing that anytime I've been hurt, too. I think we all are."

"Don't give me shit for it. It's frustrating," I said, defensively.

Adrik's wide smile stretched across his face. "What? I might like extra spicy

Sophie the most, too," he said, holding me tighter

against him.

"You boys better be careful what you wish for," I said, letting my eyes go dark as I looked at both of them.

Adrik needed to go to his office the following day. I offered to go with him,

but he said he only had a few meetings, then he would

return. "I think we're all enjoying being here so much that I don't want you to

have to leave just yet. This should be the only time I

need to go back to the building for the rest of the week,” he said that morning while we were getting ready after they’d all hit the gym and I had lifted my five-pound weight a few times under Andrei’s watchful eye.

I felt my own nervousness at the thought of being that far away from him. He’d been away from me since I was taken, but only a few floors away. We were still in the same building. Now, I was facing having to be completely away from him for a few hours. My body was clearly not happy with that decision. I felt the shaking start almost immediately. He noticed I was quiet and walked from the closet to the bed where I had sat down, asking what was wrong.

“I don’t like the idea of being away from you,” I said before he made it all the way to me.

He chuckled, saying, “I don’t like the idea of being away from you either, but it’s just for a couple of hours.” He sat next to me, putting his arm around my shoulders. As soon as he touched me, he felt my body shaking. His eyes went wide as he looked at me. “Oh, you really don’t like the idea of being away from me,” he said. He pulled me closer, rubbing my back to try and help the shaking calm down.

“I know it’s not healthy and I know at some point I need to get over it but the thought of not being in the same building as you terrifies me right now,” I said quietly. The more I thought about him being gone, the harder my body started to shake.

“It’s okay, Sephie. You’ll come with me. We’ll just come back here after I’m done. I don’t want to be apart from you either. I just didn’t want you to have to follow me around today,” he said, his hand alternating between playing with my curls and rubbing my back.

“I tend to get seriously hurt when we’re apart and I’m kind of tired of it,” I said. I could feel the tears starting to well in my eyes as he tightened his hold on me. I heard him inhale deeply, then curse under his breath.

“Sephie, you’re right. You’re absolutely right. I never put it together until now,” he said. He reached over and moved me into his lap in one motion. “You still need to eat more, for the record. That was way too easy,” he said, giving me a small smile. I tried to return the smile, but my body was still not happy with the thought of him being gone for any amount of time. He held me tighter, saying quietly, “don’t worry, love. You can even come to my meetings today if you want to. You can always come to my meetings.

Neal is one of them. He’ll be excited you’re there.” I knew he was trying to make me laugh. They all knew that making me laugh helped me get a handle on my out-of-control emotions.

I wiped the tears that had managed to escape from my cheeks, looking at him. The look of surprise on his face when he looked at my eyes was enough to finally make me laugh. “What color are they now?” He cursed in Russian. In fact, he said every curse word there was in Russian. I looked at him, confused. “Sephie, they’re a completely new color,” he said.

“Shu t up.”

“No, go look. They’re kind of blue, but it’s not your normal blue color. It’s like ice blue now. Almost wh ite, love. This is scarier than your demon eyes,” he said.

I got up from his lap, walking quickly to the bathroom. I wasn’t sure how quickly they changed, so I was trying to beat them.

When I looked in the mirror, I saw exactly what he had described. The normal three rings of color were gone and my eyes were

almost white, with just a hint of blue. Adrik had followed me into the bathroom to see my reaction. I just stood and stared at my reflection, almost like I didn't recognize myself. "I'm gonna need contacts. I don't know how long I'm going to be able to hide this if it keeps happening every time I have an emotional reaction." I turned to look at him, trying not to smile. "Have you met me? Do you know how insanely emotional I am?" I asked, trying to be overly dramatic for effect.

He just laughed at me, pointing to the mirror again. When I looked this time, my eyes had changed to green. But it was the normal green that was there all the time. The green had just overtaken the brown and blue rings. It was much easier for me to recognize myself this way.

"Apparently, white means fear and green means sarcasm," he said as he wrapped his arms around me. "I can also have contacts made for you, if that's what you want."

"I don't know how else to hide this. I don't know it's happening. I was only just starting to be able to tell when my eyes go dark and now they've just gone completely rogue and are out here freestyling. I said my stomach was untamed, but clearly it's my eyes that are untamed," I said,

Adrik pulled me to him, laughing. "We'll talk about it more later. I said I didn't want to tell the guys about it because I was feeling selfish when it comes to you. I never mind you around them. It's not that. I only just got you back completely though. I didn't want to, ire. We might not have a choice with that, though." He took a deep breath, still thinking out loud, he said, "I don't mind the guys knowing about this eventually, but I don't know how I feel about anyone you talk to being able to see this. Contacts might be necessary in certain situations."

“You mean so I don’t scare off all your business partners?” I asked, grinning at him. “What about Ghost? Didn’t he used to be the wealthiest guy in the city? Well, yeah, until he fell in love with this stone-cold weirdo who couldn’t control her emotions and scared everyone away. Now, everyone is afraid to do business with him.”

“That won’t happen, love,” he said, shaking his head at me. He grabbed my hand, pulling me with him out of the bathroom. He stopped briefly to send a text to Viktor, then grabbed my hand once more. He walked to the closet and grabbed my coat. “You’re going to need this,” he said. “It’s colder on the helicopter.”

I grinned at him. “You already arranged for the helicopter so you’d get home faster, huh?*

“Guilty,” he said, holding my coat up for me so I could put it on. He adjusted the collar, moving my hair out of the way, then pressed his cheek gently

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to my neck. “I’m secretly very happy that you’re coming with me today. I was not looking forward to being apart from you,” he said as he wrapped his arms around me, holding me tightly against him.

Chapter 335

Chapter Three Hundred Thirty-Five

Sephie

That afternoon, while Andrei, Misha, and I were in the penthouse waiting on Adrik's meetings to end, Ms. Jackson called Misha to ask if she could see me. He gave her an excuse of not being with me, but said he would find me and call her back. Ms.

Jackson said, "don't worry, son, I don't want her to come down here." Then she added very quietly, "it's about Giana." Misha promised to call her back in a few minutes after he found me and found out what my schedule was.

"Giana's been kept to her apartment since we got Armando, hasn't she?" I asked.

"She was, but they've recently let her go see Ms. Jackson, She's under heavy guard, though. She can't go anywhere on her own right now. She apparently threw a tantrum and threatened to kill herself and all kinds of nonsense, so they finally let her go see Ms. Jackson a few times a week just to shut her up." Andrei said.

"Huh. Wouldn't have guessed that would ever happen," I said, as sarcastically as possible.

"It's up to you if you want to deal with this or not. I can call Ivan, too. We'll go fetch her again if you want to see her. I can let Boss know, too," Misha said.

"Ms. Jackson wouldn't call if she didn't have something important. Does she know about Armando and what he did to me?" I asked.

"I don't think so. Nobody's told her. She called a few times when you were still hurt, but I told her we were away. I didn't think you'd be up for any kind of company," Misha said. He looked worried that I would be mad at him gatekeeping my nonexistent

social life.

“You were right to do so, my adorable Russian guardian, I couldn’t have handled talking to her before,” I said, smiling sweetly at him. I thought for a minute. “I don’t want her to come up here without Adrik knowing. He’s feeling extra private lately and I want to make sure I honor that.”

Misha quickly sent a few texts. “I told Viktor to talk to Boss about it. If he’s okay with it, he’ll send Ivan up and we can go fetch her.” Viktor quickly replied, meaning Misha must’ve caught Adrik between meetings. He read the message, looking somewhat perplexed. “He said it’s okay if she comes up, but not before he’s done for the day. He wants to be here when you talk to her.”

I smiled, knowing exactly why he wanted to be present. “Then Ms. Jackson can wait a little bit until he’s done for the day. He doesn’t have much longer anyway, does he?”

Andrei looked at his watch. “I think his last meeting should be starting shortly. I don’t think they’re going to see Armando today either. I think he wanted to go back to the house as soon as he was done.” “Whatever Ms. Jackson has to tell us shouldn’t take too long. Only a slight change in plans,” I said. I got off the couch, walking to the kitchen. “It does, however, mean that I’m gonna need a snack.”

“No talking, gazelle. I’m not supposed to be with you,” Misha said as he dialed Ms. Jackson’s number to tell her when I’d be available.

I stood quietly while he had the conversation, trying not to laugh as I thought about how much it felt like we were doing something wrong. Once he ended the call, I asked, “I feel like we’re kids making plans to sneak out of the house later. Why do I feel like we’re about to be in trouble for lying?”

They both laughed at me. “You clearly never snuck out of the house when you were younger,” Andrei said. “This is nothing, comparatively speaking.”

“Fair. Totally fair. I was a good kid. I only snuck out when my life was in danger. That’s completely different. Just know that I’m going to blame everything on you two when we get caught. That’s what little sisters are supposed to do, right?” I asked, laughing at the thought.

“That’s what my little brother always did, so that seems accurate,” Andrei said.

“Bubba, i can’t imagine you being a bad kid,” I said, rummaging through the refrigerator.

“You should talk to my mo m, then. She’ll gladly tell you differently,” he said. turned to look at him, then to Misha. “I would expect this development from Misha, but not you. You’re so thoughtful now. I just always assumed you would’ve been the same as a kid.”

“Thoughtfully defiant,” Andrei said, laughing.

“I was like you, gazelle. I was the good kid. My brothers and sister were the hellions in my family. I’m the angel,” Misha said, giving me his most cherubic smile.

“Do your siblings ha te you for that? Or are they just as adorable as you are?” I asked.

He walked to the kitchen, his phone in hand, to show me a picture of his siblings. I could tell they were related, but Misha got the best looks, by far. I looked at the picture for a moment, then looked to him.

“They ha te you,” I stated.

He laughed loudly. “Yeah, they kinda do.”

“What about you, Bubba? Is your little brother as handsome as you are?”

“I think he got all the looks. Must be a perk of being the youngest,” he said.

He got up and walked to the kitchen as well, to show

me pictures of his brother. Andrei's brother was quite handsome, just in a different way from Andrei.

"Bubba, he's not better looking than you," I said, looking at the picture.

Andrei's brother was similar in height to Andrei, but he weighed significantly less than Andrei did. "Look at him. What is he like 180 pounds soaking wet?" I asked.

Andrei laughed, which made Misha curious. He walked behind me so he could see over my shoulder. "That's a generous estimate, gazelle. I think you weigh more than he does and you're too skinny still."

Andrei took his phone back, flipping through a few more pictures, then showed us another picture of his brother. "He's a legit model, though," he said, showing us another picture of his brother.

"Okay, maybe it was standing next to you that made him look tiny. He doesn't look as small there, but he's still not prettier than you. I don't care what you say," I said.

"You're biased, spider monkey," he said, dismissively. "My brother always got all the girls when we were younger. It's kind of turned him into a dick. Max reminds me a lot of my brother."

"Ugh. That's a sad existence for your brother. He must be very empty," I said quietly.

Before Andrei could respond, Ivan walked into the penthouse. "Squish!" I said, walking to him to give him a hug.

"I didn't realize how much I missed two-armed hugs, princess," he said, holding me tightly.

"You and me both," I said. I kept my arm around his waist, leaning into his side.

"What kind of shenanigans are you three getting into now?" Ivan asked.

"We're comparing their siblings to see who's the hottest. Misha and Andrei are both clear winners in the genetic lottery," I said,

causing Ivan to laugh loudly.

“Do you have siblings, Ivan?” Misha asked, curiously.

I felt Ivan tense beside me. I was just about to answer for him, but he said, “I do. I don’t know where any of them are, though. I haven’t seen any of them since I was 7.” I looked up at him, silently asking if he was okay with this conversation. He gave me a wink and nodded his head.

Misha could tell it was sensitive territory, so he said, “plot twist, Ivan’s siblings sent him away because he was too painfully goodlooking and made them all feel bad.” Ivan laughed, shaking his head at Misha. I smiled widely at Misha, silently grateful for his wit saving the day.

Adrik, Viktor, and Stephen walked into the penthouse, further saving Ivan from having to divulge more than he was ready to. Ivan heard the door

open and gave my shoulders a squeeze, knowing I would want to go to Adrik. As soon as I saw him, I felt both the pull in my chest that was from him and my own warmth spreading over my body. I walked quickly toward him, unable to control the smile on my face, I saw the flash of surprise on his face, which likely meant my eyes had changed yet again, just before his lips found mine.

He kissed me like it had been days since he’d seen me last, Instead of hours.

He held me tighter against him as my knees threatened to give out, but stopped the kiss. He pressed his forehead to mine, one hand against my cheek, his thumb rubbing lightly against my skin. “I’m glad I didn’t have to wait any longer for that,” he said quietly. He stood up straight, so he could look at me I was worried my eyes were still different. I raised an eyebrow, silently asking him if I needed to blink. “Normal,” he said quiet

enough that only I could hear. I exhaled, clearly relieved, which caused him to laugh softly. “What’s this about Ms. Jackson?” he

asked loud enough that the guys could hear. He glanced up in Misha and Andrei’s direction, but quickly looked back at me.

“She called earlier and asked if she could see Sephie. She said she didn’t want Sephie to come down there and that she had something to tell us about Giana,” Misha said.

Adrik tore his gaze away from my eyes and looked at the guys. “Two of you go down and fetch her. She can come here.” Ivan and Misha walked toward the door to go get her. “Does she know what happened to you, solnishko?” he asked.

Chapter 336

Chapter Three Hundred Thirty-Six

Sephie

“I don’t think so. You know how quick she is, though. She might suspect something has happened. Misha said she called a few times when I was still really hurt and asked to see me, but he always lied and said we were away. I’m sure she knows something is going on with Armando, if she hasn’t seen him in weeks. It’s anybody’s guess as to what Giana has told her about him,” I said.

“The guys that are on her said she never asks about him. Like literally not once.” Viktor said.

“I feel like that’s weird,” I said, turning toward the guys. Adrik kept his arms around me, pulling me back against him.

“It’s definitely weird,” Stephen said. “We know their relationship wasn’t at all what it appeared to be, but it did seem like there was genuine affection between the two of them. At least at first.”

“I would not have pegged her as someone who could lie so easily and so well,” Adrik said.

“Maybe like Armando, her idiot persona is just an act,” Stephen said.

Ivan and Misha returned with Ms. Jackson as we were all still discussing possibilities for who Giana really was. Ms. Jackson smiled at me when she walked in, but she immediately squinted her eyes, looking me up and down. “Something happened, child. You’re too skinny.”

“It’s a long story, Ms. Jackson,” I said, walking to her to give her a hug. I walked with her back toward the kitchen, where everyone else was and pulled out a chair for her to sit at the kitchen island. I walked back to Adrik, who opened his arm for me. “I am very curious what information you have for us about Giana?” I asked, leaning into Adrik. I was starting to feel nervous again

and I didn't like it. I was also now worried about my eyes changing in front of everyone. He felt my slight shift in mood and kissed my temple. His hand found its way under my shirt, his thumb rubbing my skin gently in an effort to keep me calm.

"I knew something had happened when I didn't see her for a few weeks. She told me they were supposed to go to Italy at the end of last month, but I saw guards outside her door. Even an idiot would know that you don't need guards outside your door if you're gone to another country. I didn't ask questions and I didn't contact her. Then she showed up at my door a few weeks after that, almost like nothing had changed. She looked better. She'd clearly been forced to sober up while she was being kept to her apartment, but she acted like nothing was wrong the first few times she stopped by to see me. Only difference were the guards that never left her. I didn't ask about them, either. For all I knew, Armando had finally gotten serious about his security. Well, last week, she finally came up with an excuse to step away from her guards for a few minutes. She brought clothes with her, saying she needed my opinion on what she should wear to some function she clearly made up. She called me back to the bedroom to ask for my help to zip up a dress. One of the guards came with me, but I told him in Russian that there was no way to get out of my apartment except through the front door and that she would be fine in there. Should've seen the look of surprise on his face," she said, laughing. She composed herself and continued. "Once we were alone, she came clean on a lot of stuff. She told me she had been planning to rob Armando, but since she was basically being held prisoner, she didn't know if that was still going on or not. She'd had her phone taken away from her, so there was no way she could get information out to anyone. Robbing

Armando was her ticket out. She'd met a guy, somehow, that was going to take her to South America and keep her safe. She said she took the job with Armando to try and get away from her family. The plan to rob Armando was to try and get away from him."

"Do you know who this other guy is?" I asked.

"No, she said his name was Martin, but that's all she said about him," Ms. Jackson said. We all looked at each other, mostly shocked at this revelation.

"What's her plan now? Did she tell you?" Ivan asked. He was a mixture of amused and angry. It was quite the sight to behold.

"She's somewhat terrified that her entire plan is going to fall through. She's got no way to contact anyone. She asked to borrow my phone, but I didn't bring it to the bedroom with me. You know, young people are practically attached to those things. Half the time, I forget where I left it," she said, flippantly. "She just said the next time she comes I'm supposed to leave my phone in the bathroom for her so she can use it before she leaves."

"We'll give you a phone for her to use. Don't let her use your phone," Viktor said.

"I don't know what she thinks she's going to plan. She's got no way to get out of this building without someone openly declaring war on you. I don't know who this other guy is, but he's gotta be a complete moron if he thinks that's a good idea," Ms. Jackson said.

"We'll take care of it, Ms. Jackson. Thank you for coming to us with this," Adrik said. I could feel that he was also a good mixture of angry and amused as well.

Ms. Jackson looked at Adrik seriously. “I didn’t do it for you. I did it for her. If they come after you, they come after her and she’s had enough of that in her life.”

I looked at Adrik, slightly worried her words would make his anger take over, but he smiled at her. “I could not agree more, Ms. Jackson.”

Ms. Jackson stayed in the penthouse a little while longer while Viktor and Ivan got a cell phone set up for Giana to use. It would work like a normal cell phone, but it would also send all the information of who she was talking to, along with a copy of her texts to Viktor so he could see what she was planning. We also wanted to make sure it was the same Martin before we brought Trino in on this newest bit of information.

“When is she planning on coming back to see you?” I asked Ms. Jackson.

“She said she’d be back tomorrow. They only allow her to come once or twice a week right now,” she said.

Viktor handed her the cell phone for Giana. “Let her use this one when she’s there,” he said.

“Hide your cell phone when she’s around so she doesn’t happen upon it. You also want to keep your phone away from this one, as it’ll copy your cell phone information and send it to us,” Ivan said, trying not to laugh at the thought.

“I might need to borrow that phone and leave it with Edith the next time I see her. I know she’s talking shi t about me in between Bingo nights,” she said, laughing.

“Let us know when you want to give her something to actually talk shi t about,” Ivan said, smiling sweetly at her.

Once we were back at the house, we discussed this latest development while I made dinner. “Martin thinking he’s saving Giana

from Armando would explain why he was dumb enough to go to the Mexicans, Stephen said.

“Agreed. I do wonder what she’s told him, if it’s the same Martin. I don’t know how else she would’ve met anyone from South America, who’s also willing to steal from a mafia boss, and thinks he can protect her from the same mafia boss he’s willing to steal from,” Ivan said.

“It has to be Trino’s Martin,” I said. “They had to have started this while we were at Trino’s island house. That’s the only explanation. He’s never been up here and Armando hasn’t gone to Colombia. It had to be there that either he caught her eye or she caught his.”

“I would not have expected this from Martin. Trino has always spoken highly of him,” Adrik said.

“Boobies,” I said. They all looked to me for more clarification, which made me laugh. “Boobies make men do dumb shit all the time.”

Stephen cleared his throat. “Some men.”

“Valid point, Yoden the Enabler. Boobies make some men do dumb shit all the time,” I said, laughing.

“But still. Like Ivan said, this still doesn’t quite make sense. Giana is a pretty woman, don’t get me wrong, but this dude is literally willing to risk his life for a woman he’s probably never slept with and likely hasn’t even made it to first base with?” Andrei said.

I cleared my throat this time. “You mean how you’ve all risked your lives for me at one point?”

“You’re different, spider monkey,” Andrei said.

I fail to see how.”

“You don’t suck,” Misha said, seriously, which made me laugh.

“Okay, point well made. But Martin likely doesn’t think Giana su cks either. Or he’s hoping she does often. It could go either way,” I said, laughing at my own di rty joke, which caused them all to laugh heartily. “I rest my case,” Misha said, sliding his arm around my shoulders. He kissed the top of my head, whispering, “you’re my favorite, gazelle.”

“Even bigger than the question of how often and how well Giana su cks anything is whether Martin will attempt to rescue her from the building.” Stephen said. He was normally so serious and so straight-faced when he said anything, but he was still having a hard time keeping the smile from his face.

“He has to be planning on splitting from Trino. Do you guys really think Trino would think him trying to get with a boss’s girlfriend was a good idea?” I asked. “And there’s no way Trino would support him moving against Adrik in any way, which is what it would be should he attempt to get her from this building.”

“I don’t think Trino knows.” Andret said. “Don’t you think we would’ve picked up on it while he was here if he knew something? When he was thinking about Martin, I only got something about the Mexicans. Nothing else. Surely, him trying to be Giana’s knight in shining armor would’ve come up. Even if he was trying to hide it, like he was trying to hide the fight between him and Martin.”

“Valid point, Bubba. I only caught tension because of the Mexicans too. It’s likely he doesn’t know,” I said.

“We’ll know tomorrow for sure when she uses that phone,” Viktor said.

“What’s the plan going to be if it is Trino’s Martin?” I asked Adrik.

He took a deep breath. “I’m not sure. I’ll tell him, obviously, but I also might let it play out a little more to see what their plans are

before I tell him. I don't think she's smart enough to be able to get out of the building on her own. He would have to come for her.

If that happens, he's dead," he said.

"She clearly doesn't really care about him either. She's a serial user," I said. "I should hook her up with Max."

The guys enjoyed another round of laughter. "We're so glad you're back to normal, princess," Ivan said, still laughing.

Chapter 337

Chapter Three Hundred Thirty-Seven

Sephie

We were all somewhat impatient to get news from the cell phone Viktor gave to Ms. Jackson the next day. Finally, Viktor started to get info in the afternoon. He checked the number that she called. "It's Trino's Martin," he said. "She called him. They talked for two minutes."

"I'm impressed she memorized his number, not gonna lie. Did not expect that amount of brain capacity from her," I said.

Adrik exhaled loudly. "Trine is not going to be happy about this," he said. Misha's phone beeped. He checked the message, laughing as he read it. "Oh, my lives are about to get so entertaining. Ms.

Jackson said Giana stole the phone. She thanked us for giving her an extra one."

"Isn't that bad, though? Like won't she figure out it's not Ms. Jackson's phone now that she has it?" I asked.

"Clearly you need to reduce your brain capacity expectations once more," Ivan said.

"Fair. Totally fair." I said, laughing.

"She's texting him now," Viktor said. "They're talking about the plan to rob Anando, it looks like. He said the plan can still go on and will be even easier now that we have Armando. So far, no mention of getting her from the building." His phone beeped again.

He looked at the message, but got up and handed me the phone. "She's texting him in Italian now."

I looked at the text, confused as to why she would be texting him in Italian.

As I read through the text, I could feel my cheeks

flush. "Oh. My. I know why Martin is willing to risk his life for this crazy bitch now. She's got s*xting down to a f**king art. Jesus, if

nothing else works out for her, she can get a job as a phone s*x operator.” I read through the rest of the text. “Wow. She really puts it all out there. In graphic detail,”

“Gross,” Misha said. “Although I would want to know what she was saying if it were anybody but Giana. Damn this hatred I have for her!”

“He might be in love with her,” I said as he responded to her very graphic text. “Oh. Oh! Something happened at the island house. He says he thinks about that night constantly.”

“When could anything happen? We were there for only one night and we all saw her with Armando at the club,” Andrei asked.

“You guys left before Armando got drunk off his a ss though,” Stephen said.

“Maybe he passed out when they got back to the house, which gave her the chance to sneak off with Martin.”

“He told us that she was the one that got drunk off her a ss,” I said, somewhat surprised.

“She might’ve been, but she holds her liquor better than he does from what I saw. She had to help him out of the club,” Stephen said.

“Did you see her leave with him?” Viktor asked.

“They left the club together. What happened outside the club, I don’t know. She might’ve sent him back to the house and she left with Martin. I didn’t follow them outside to see,” Stephen said.

I felt myself getting angry at all the lies that Armando had told us. This one didn’t even matter in the grand scheme of things, but I still felt myself getting angry at just how easy it had been for him to make up a complete alternate reality in front of us. Adrik’s warm hand slipped underneath my shirt, his thumb rubbing my bare skin lightly. He pressed his cheek gently to my neck, kissing my neck lightly. “I know, solnishko. It makes me angry too,” he said quietly.

I leaned back against him, taking a deep breath. I grabbed his arms and pulled them around my waist. “You’re getting so much better at that,” I said, kissing his cheek.

Viktor’s phone beeped once more. I looked at it, reading the latest message. “Aww, that’s all for tonight, gentlemen. She says the only charger she can find won’t work on this phone so she’s going to turn it off until she can lift a charger from Ms. Jackson.

Rude,” I said.

“You called it, princess. Serial user, Ivan said, laughing.

Viktor sighed. “So, let’s assume that they’re going to steal the artwork from Armando’s house, since that’s really all they can get to. I’m sure there’s more stuff of value there, but the artwork is the main thing. Artwork is really hard to move as far as stolen items go. They’re not going to finance much with that loot.”

“What are Martin’s finances like? I know Trino’s wealthy and has legitimate businesses, but what about Martin?” I asked.

“From what I know, Martin is doing fine financially. He’s not quite the businessman that Trino is, but he has his own investments that allow him to live quite comfortably, plus whatever Trino pays him.” Adrik said.

“This still doesn’t make complete sense to my brain. Why would he risk so much for her? Can one woman be that good in bed?

Legitimate question, by the way. I really want to know,” I said.

Adrik laughed, holding me tighter. “I’m not the one you should be asking that question to, my love. I would risk everything for you.”

“You guys don’t count,” Ivan said.

“It’s not about Giana, I don’t think. I think she’s an excuse,” Stephen said.

“What do you mean?” I asked. I could always count on Stephen to fill in the psychological gaps for me.

“Martin likely hasn’t been happy with Trino, for whatever reason, for some time. It’s only just now coming to a head. He’s using Giana as the excuse he needs to finally make a move. It just so happens that he can feel like the white knight coming to her rescue if he risks everything to get her safely away from Armando. That cancels out whatever guilt he feels for leaving Trino for whatever trivial reason he has,” he said.

“The user is getting used. That’s somewhat satisfying,” I said.

“Are you going to wait to tell Trino?” Ivan asked Adrik.

“Let’s give them more time to see what they give us. You know what kind of temper Trino has. He might not be able to sit on this one if we tell him too early. With his guys’ loyalty already in question, it puts him in a dangerous position,” Adrik said.

“Shit. I didn’t think about that,” I said. “His guys might side with Martin and help him overthrow Trino. Giana definitely isn’t as weird as me, although it could be argued that she’s definitely put some kind of spell on Martin. Shit, shit, shit.”

“Boobies, am I right?” Stephen said, completely straight-faced. Everyone erupted into laughter..

It was two more days before Viktor got more information from Giana’s stolen fake phone. Viktor had one of the guards that was watching her leave a charger for the phone in the hallway like someone had dropped it outside Ms. Jackson’s apartment. Of course, she picked it up.

Adrik and I were in his office when all the guys came in, clearly amused. “Is she back?” I asked, excitedly.

“She’s back,” Misha said, grinning at me. I clapped my hands, waiting to hear what had been said.

“I think we all need to get out more,” I said, shaking my head.

“It looks like they’re finalizing the plans for Armando’s house. Martin said he has a few guys that can do it,” Viktor said.

“Does he give names, by chance?” Adrik asked. “Trino’s dealers are very loyal to him. I would like to know if any of them are doing this for Martin without Trino knowing.”

“No names,” Viktor said. “But they’re planning on making it happen this weekend. We can have guys watch Armando’s house to see who it is.”

Adrik nodded. “Make that happen. If they’re Trino’s guys too, he needs to know. Maybe Martin has his own guys here, but if that’s the case, I want to know. He doesn’t get to have guys in my city,” he said. I was across the room from him, but I felt his anger loud and clear. I knew my eyes were dark. It seemed like any level of anger would make them go dark now. I went to Adrik, even though I was enjoying feeling his anger. I didn’t necessarily want it to stop this time. Trino was the only one staying loyal through all this, so a betrayal of him felt like a betrayal of us. Adrik pushed his chair back from his desk, opening his arms for me.

“Do we let this robbery happen?” Ivan asked.

“I don’t necessarily care if they steal from Armando. Serves him right. But I want to know if Martin is bold enough to think he can operate in my city without my knowledge. If that’s the case, I won’t need to tell Trino anything until after I’ve killed Martin,” Adrik said.

“Giana is asking about Martin getting her out of the building,” Viktor said.

“He didn’t know she was being held there, under guard, apparently. He says he thought she was at Armando’s house.”

There was silence for a few minutes, then Viktor’s phone beeped. He looked at the message, but stood up to hand me the phone.

“Is now really the time to be s*xting?” I asked as I took the phone from him. I looked at the message and immediately started laughing. “She’s cussing him out. She must type faster in Italian than in English.” I kept reading, laughing more as I went. “She’s calling him a do nkey, which is hilarious.”

“Why would she call him a do nkey?” Misha asked.

“For Italians, it’s an insult. It’s the same as telling someone they’re st upid. She also tells him to go get f**ked, basically,” I said, still laughing. Martin began to reply, apologizing for not knowing. “He says he couldn’t have known. She hasn’t contacted him in weeks. He didn’t know they were living there. He assumed she would be at Armando’s house.”

“I have to side with Martin on this one. I would’ve assumed the same thing.” Misha said.

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“Right? It seems like the logical assumption here,” I said as we waited for Giana’s response. “She’s asking him again how he plans to get her out.

Chapter 338

Chapter Three Hundred Thirty-Eight

Sephie

It was two more days before Viktor got more information from Giana's stolen fake phone. Viktor had one of the guards that was watching her leave a charger for the phone in the hallway like someone had dropped it outside Ms. Jackson's apartment. Of course, she picked it up.

Adrik and I were in his office when all the guys came in, clearly amused. "Is she back?" I asked, excitedly.

"She's back," Misha said, grinning at me. I clapped my hands, waiting to hear what had been said.

"I think we all need to get out more," I said, shaking my head.

"It looks like they're finalizing the plans for Armando's house. Martin said he has a few guys that can do it," Viktor said.

"Does he give names, by chance?" Adrik asked. "Trino's dealers are very loyal to him. I would like to know if any of them are doing this for Martin. without Trino knowing."

"No names," Viktor said. "But they're planning on making it happen this weekend. We can have guys watch Armando's house to see who it is."

Adrik nodded. "Make that happen. If they're Trino's guys too, he needs to know. Maybe Martin has his own guys here, but if that's the case, I want to know. He doesn't get to have guys in my city," he said. I was across the room from him, but I felt his anger loud and clear. I knew my eyes were dark. It seemed like any level of anger would make them go dark now. I went to Adrik, even though I was enjoying feeling his anger, I didn't necessarily want it to stop this time. Trino was the only one staying loyal through

all this, so a betrayal of him felt like a betrayal of us. Adrik pushed his chair back from his desk, opening his arms for me.

“Do we let this robbery happen?” Ivan asked.

“I don’t necessarily care if they steal from Armando. Serves him right. But I want to know if Martin is bold enough to think he can operate in my city, without my knowledge. If that’s the case, I won’t need to tell Trino anything until after I’ve killed Martin,” Adrik said.

“Giana is asking about Martin getting her out of the building,” Viktor said.

“He didn’t know she was being held there, under guard, apparently. He says he thought she was at Armando’s house.”

There was silence for a few minutes, then Viktor’s phone beeped. He looked at the message, but stood up to hand me the phone.

“Is now really the time to be s*xting?” I asked as I took the phone from him. I looked at the message and immediately started laughing. “She’s cussing him out. She must type faster in Italian than in English.” I kept reading, laughing more as I went. “She’s calling him a do nkey, which is hilarious.”

“Why would she call him a do nkey?” Misha asked.

“For Italians, it’s an insult. It’s the same as telling someone they’re stupid. She also tells him to go get f**ked, basically,” I said, still laughing. Martin began to reply, apologizing for not knowing. “He says he couldn’t have known. She hasn’t contacted him in weeks. He didn’t know they were living there. He assumed she would be at Armando’s house.”

“I have to side with Martin on this one. I would’ve assumed the same thing,” Misha said.

“Right? It seems like the logical assumption here,” I said as we waited for Giana’s response. “She’s asking him again how he

plans to get her out.”

“This could go very badly for Martin,” Andrei said.

“He says he needs time to come up with a plan to get her out of the building. He’s asking her if there’s any way she can ditch her guards and he says trying to send a team into the building is going to be next to impossible,” I said.

“Well, at least we know he’s not a complete moron,” Viktor said.

I laughed at Giana’s response. “She’s still mad. She’s cussing him more and wants to know how long he needs. She said she’s starting to regret

sleeping with him that night, so now we know the answer to that question.”

“Plot twist, she popped Martin’s cherry and that’s why he’s completely in love with her,” Ivan said, causing a round of laughter from everyone.

“You’re not wrong, Squish,” I said. “It would explain quite a lot. I’m starting to question whether you guys have been telling me the truth about my extra spicy side though. Seeing it in Giana doesn’t seem very fun.”

“Not even in the same ballpark, gazelle,” Misha said.

Adrik held me tighter, saying quietly, “never compare yourself to anyone ever again. There’s no comparison.”

Before I could react to his words, Martin replied to Giana. “He says he needs a day or two to scope out the building and see what his options are. He said his guys can watch the building and find out if there’s any way in.”

“So, Ivan was right. This guy is pussy whipped. Clearly he’s not had enough of it,” Andrei said.

“She says she can’t wait much longer. She’s going to try to escape with or without him,” I said. “She’s acting like she’s in a

dungeon. I mean, granted, she's being held against her will, but she's got everything she needs for f**k's sake. Nobody's chaining her to the f**king floor while they beat one of the people who mean the most to her in this world in the next room. While she hears everything." My anger came on so suddenly and so strongly that it almost surprised me, but it was also mixed with fear. I wouldn't let myself feel the fear when everything was happening. I knew I had to keep my wits about me, so I pushed all the fear down, but it was still there. Waiting to be acknowledged. It all came flooding back to me, overwhelming my anger. I immediately started to shake, even worse than I had days before when I was scared of being apart from Adrik.

He felt it right away, whispering to me to try to keep me calm. He took the phone from my hand and threw it on his desk. "Close your eyes, love. Listen to my voice. You're safe. You're with me. Nobody can hurt you here," he said. He just repeated those words until he felt me take a breath and my body relax slightly. He turned me around in his lap so he could stand up with me in his arms. He walked us both to the couch, keeping me in his lap. He kept repeating that I was safe and I was with him and that nobody could hurt me now. His hand ran up and down my back lightly, trying to calm the shaking.

I took a deep breath, lifting my head from his shoulder to look at him. I could tell from the look on his face that my eyes had changed. I shut my eyes again and rested my head on his shoulder again. Viktor's phone beeped a few times. I heard one of the guys get up to get it. I felt Adrik shake his head, telling them to wait. We sat in silence for a few more minutes. I took another deep breath, looking at Adrik once more to see if my eyes had returned to normal yet. He smiled sweetly at me, nodding his

head once. He reached up and put his palm against my cheek, his thumb rubbing gently back and forth.

I sighed once more, turning to look at the concerned faces looking back at me. I started to apologize, but Ivan cut me off. "That is never something you should apologize for, princess. You never let yourself feel the fear while everything was happening, but it doesn't mean it went away," he said.

"It's important that you admit to yourself you were scared in that situation, Seph. We all were," Stephen said.

"You were?" I asked, moving so I was sitting in between Adrik's legs and leaning back against him so I could see everyone again.

I pulled his arms around me, resting mine on top of his.

"Of course we were. How could we not be?" Andrei asked.

"Well, now that you ask it like that, I don't know," I said.

"Just because we've been in similar situations before doesn't mean we weren't all scared this was the first time we weren't going to get to you in time," Misha said.

"Having to be careful and patient when it came to looking for you was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do," Viktor said.

"We were all worried we would be able to get you both back," Adrik said.

I smiled at them. "I was sure you guys would find us. I was scared that I wouldn't be able to hang on long enough for you to find us. Armando doesn't know how to punch very well, but he's strong and I was completely defenseless," I said quietly, looking at the floor.

"You were worried about the one thing I was sure of," Stephen said. "Once we found you, I knew you'd be able to hold on long enough for us to get you out. I've never met anyone as strong as you, Seph. I was more worried they would get rid of Ivan. Armando beating you was

completely unexpected for me. I knew they needed you. I didn't expect him to lose it."

"I might've provoked that," I said. "I'm mostly accountable for that."

Adrik clicked his tongue, turning me so I would look at him again. "You bear none of the responsibility of that. I don't care how angry he was about anything. He had no right to touch you," he said. He was angry when he said it. I knew on some level he wasn't angry with me, but it still surprised me enough that I felt a twinge of fear return and I tensed. He felt it, pulling me toward him. He whispered, "I'm sorry, Sephie. Keep your eyes closed again. I didn't mean to frighten you."

Viktor's phone beeped again. Without raising my head or opening my eyes, I asked what was being said. "Martin is assuring her that he's going to get her out, one way or another. He's begging her not to try to escape on her own," Viktor said.

"I can't handle the back and forth between semi-smart Martin and dumb as f**k Martin. I'm getting whiplash," I said. I felt Adrik laugh as he put his hand on my neck, pulling me up so I would look at him. He smiled, saying quietly so only I could hear, "green does mean sarcasm, it appears." He pulled me to him, kissing me gently. He left his hand on my neck as I rested my head on his shoulder, my face buried in his neck once more.

Chapter 339

Chapter Three Hundred Thirty-Nine

Sephie

“She’s giving him a few days to get a plan together, but she said she’s tired of waiting. She says she can’t stay here any longer,”

Viktor said.

“Jesus, she’s dramatic,” I said. “I mean, it’s not her fault, but seriously. Shu t the f**k up already.”

They all laughed. “I’ll have the guys at the building try to find out whe’s watching the building. I’ll also put a few guys on Armando’s house. He only has a few guys there normally. They might’ve given up since we’ve had him.”

“I want to know who’s working for Martin. It does not make me happy if he has guys in my city,” Adrik said. “I want to wait to see if Martin is du mb enough to make a move against my building before telling Trino about all this.” He pulled me up so he could look at me again. “Do you think you can find the answer to that? Can Misha see if he’s planning on trying to use force to get Giana out?”

I thought for a second before answering. “I need to be around him or hear him to get something from him,” I said. I glanced at Misha. “Do you think we can find him and see what his plans are? We can use Bubba too. Maybe we’ll get sound again.”

“It’s worth a try,” he said.

“I think we need to give it a day or two, though. I’m not sure we’ll get anything useful right now, because he doesn’t know what the he ll to do yet,” I said. “And also, I’m scared of seeing him thinking about her graphic text from earlier. I don’t need that seared into my brain.”

“Ewww, gross! Why would you even think about that, gazelle? Now I’m going to be paranoid to try to find him,” Misha said, acting like he was going to vomit.

“You, Are. Welcome. My adorable Russian guardian,” I said, laughing.

“I ha te you,” Misha said, trying not to laugh.

We waited three more days for Martin to come up with a plan for getting Giana out. She went silent on him while she waited for him to figure out how to be her savior. We had moved back to the penthouse, as Adrik had several meetings for a few days straight. We’d been able to spend almost the entire week at the house, which felt a little bit like Heaven for all of us.

The messages from Martin came in while Adrik was in a meeting and Viktor was in his normal master of the schedule duties. The rest of us were oblivious until that evening when they came upstairs after Adrik’s day was finished. I was working on dinner, with help from Misha and Andrei when everyone else walked in.

I put everything I had in my hands down, walking to Adrik. His wide smile stretched across his face as soon as he saw me walking toward him. He opened his arms, hugging me tightly to him. He lifted me off the floor, holding me against him as I giggled. I could feel the stress melt away the longer he held me.

Ever since I’d told him about my fear of being away from him, as well as finally admitting that I was terrified when Ivan and I were kidnapped, he’d been even more affectionate with me, if that was even possible. It was like another intimacy level was unlocked for us. We both felt like we were even more in sync with each other.

My eyes continued to change, depending on my mood. So far, I’d been able to hide it from the guys, but it was starting to happen so frequently that I was getting worried I wouldn’t be able to keep it from them for much longer. Although, I had to admit that I

loved having a secret that only Adrik and I shared. I loved every single one of the guys, but I was enjoying the extra intimacy that Adrik and I had lately. The secret of my ever-changing eyes. was something for him alone. For now.

Once Adrik put me down, I turned to see Ivan's devious grin. "She's back?" I asked..

"She's back," he said.

"Come on, Papa Bear. Out with it," I said, pulling Adrik back to the kitchen with me so I could finish dinner while listening to the latest development.

"Martin finally got back to her. She's been completely silent. He's sent a few texts to her, checking on her, but she hasn't responded to any of them," Viktor said.

"Rude, but not unexpected from her," I said.

"She's got serious Tori vibes sometimes," Misha said.

Andrei laughed. "That's why you hate her so much. You also hate Tori," he said.

Misha looked at Andrei like he'd never put that together before this moment.

"How did I not figure that out before now?" Misha said.

"Martin said he's come up with a plan to get her out, but it's going to take time. He says, and I quote, 'the security at the building is next level.'" Viktor said, proudly. "He said he's planning on creating a diversion so he can get her out without too many people seeing it."

"Please tell me he's going to walk in the lobby and yell 'fire,'" I said.

"He does not specify, but that's really his only viable option," Ivan said.

"What about Armando's house? Did that happen?" I asked, setting the food out for them.

"Sephie, this smells amazing, for the record," Viktor said.

“New recipe. Tell me if you want it to be in regular rotation,” I said, grinning at him.

They did clean out Armando’s house over the weekend. Our guys got pics of the guys that did the job, but nobody knows them,”

Ivan said.

“Uh oh. That doesn’t bode well for our dear recently deflowered Martin,” I said.

Stephen choked on his food as he was laughing. “Warning next time, Seph. Not while I’m chewing,” he said, still laughing as he took a drink of water trying to stop coughing and laughing at the same time.

“No jokes at the table, children,” I said, sternly, causing more laughter. “How much did they take from Armando?” I asked after everyone had calmed down

“Everything but the safes. They legit brought in trucks and cleaned everything out. Furniture, everything. It looked like a moving company was there,”

Ivan said.

“I’m surprised they left the safes. I would’ve thought they would have moved those, thinking they’d be able to break into them later,” Stephen said.

“Same. I had our guys move the safes here. I’m not above cutting his finger off and popping an eyeball out to get it open,” Ivan said.

I coughed this time. “We don’t use that kind of language at dinner, Squish,” I said, pretending like I was going to vomit. He looked at me, only somewhat apologetic.

“I support this line of thinking,” Stephen said.

“Of course the inventor of enabling would agree with that,” I said. Stephen simply grinned at me. Completely unapologetic for his support of such behavior.

“What about Trino?” Misha asked.

“It’s looking more like I’m going to tell Trino after I kill Martin, given he’s got guys here without my permission. I am curious to see what his plan for getting Giana out of the building is, though. I had planned to let her go after I’m done with Armando. She’s fairly insignificant and I don’t care that she cleaned out his house. But now, she might not survive this either,” Adrik said.

I suddenly had a thought come into mind. “I don’t disagree about killing either one of them, but I think telling Trino before you do anything to Martin will be better than waiting until after. Out of respect, sure, whatever, but I think it has to do more with his guys’ wavering loyalty. Martin disappearing

Is going to cause a rift with them. Trino needs to have new guys in place before it happens or he’s going to be in danger,” I said.

Adrik nodded, looking to Misha for confirmation. Misha had his faraway look for a moment, then came back to the present moment. “I agree with Sephie. He needs notice about Martin. It doesn’t seem like he’s going to disagree with you. I think they’re still arguing, but his guys are a problem.”

“Totally accountable for that one,” I said quietly, taking a sip of water.

Ivan heard me, laughing. “I think your demons have been hanging out with my demons a little too much, princess. You just showed them for who they really are. You were right when you said if you saving Martin was enough to cause them to question their loyalty, they were never loyal in the first place. Trino needed to know that. It’s going to save him in the end.”

“I still question the sanity of anyone who’s completely fine with chopping people’s heads off but me knowing the future is out of line. Makes no sense,” I said,

“It does, though. People fear what they can’t explain. They can’t fathom you being any different from them and they don’t have anything special about them, so that means you can’t either. At least in their minds,” Stephen said.

“This is why they burned so many villages to get to you, isn’t it?” I asked.

“50/50. Half were insurance scams, the other half were attempts on me,” Stephen said.

Chapter 340

Chapter Three Hundred Forty

Sephie

After dinner, while everyone else worked on cleaning up the kitchen for me, I pulled Misha and Andrei to the side. “So, I’m really not sure how we got sound last time, but I want to see if we can get sound again this time. Although if he’s speaking Spanish the whole time, it’ll be useless anyway. But let’s give it a go and see what we can find out about the dumbest Colombian to walk the earth,” I said. They both laughed at me, each one taking one of my hands. “I have both hands available this time. Maybe it’ll be an extra power boost.”

It was different this time. I could clearly see Andrei’s thoughts while Misha worked on finding Martin. I wanted to ask if he could see mine, but I didn’t want to interrupt Misha. It took a few moments for Misha to find Martin, but once he did, we could clearly see him and hear him, like he was standing in front of us.

This time, instead of it being a movie playing in front of us, we were in the movie. It was like we were standing in the room with Martin, only he couldn’t see us. He was talking on the phone, in Italian, which was incredibly surprising but ended the call before I could tell who he was speaking to. He dialed another number, waiting for the person to pick up. I vaguely heard Viktor’s phone beep in the background, so I knew he must’ve been calling Giana before I heard her voice answer his call.

They talked briefly, but he told her his plan for trying to get her out. In English, thankfully. She started crying. She was switching between Italian and English while she told him how happy she was and how she couldn’t wait to see him. She started to tell him

all the dirty things she was going to do to him once he got her out. Of course, she said that part in Italian so I was the only one made to suffer through that part of the conversation. I must've made a face or said how gross it was to have to listen to out loud, because I could hear the guys laughing quietly behind me. After their conversation, the fast forward button was pushed and we saw Martin making another phone call. He was in a different location than before, but I still didn't recognize it. I fully expected him to speak Spanish when the person on the other end of the line answered, but I was wrong. He had a conversation in Italian, but I understood everything. Then, we all heard it. He said Sal's name. Both guys squeezed my hands when he addressed Sal by name. "Shit," we all said at the same time. The vision ended shortly after, leaving the three of us in stunned silence, I felt Adrik walk up behind me, touching my shoulder gently. I think he could feel my emotions going completely off the rails as my mind raced through possibilities. "Sephie?" he said quietly. I instantly knew he was worried about my eyes giving everyone a show. I let go of Misha and Andrei's hands and turned to look at Adrik, immediately seeing the look on his face that meant my eyes were doing their own thing. I groaned, then put my head on his shoulder, hiding my face from everyone else while I tried to get a handle on my emotions. I felt Adrik's arms around me, holding me firmly against him. "It's okay, solnishko. We can show them. I don't think you're going to be able to hide it forever," he whispered to me.

I took a deep breath, trying to get a handle on everything and just concentrate on my anger. They already knew about my demon eyes, so I could show them that. I just needed to let my anger overtake everything else and it would be okay. When I looked at

Adrik, he smirked at me. “Demon eyes for added emphasis,” he said, still barely above a whisper.

“I can do this,” I said quiet enough that only he could hear me. I felt the pull in my chest from him as he leaned down and kissed my forehead.

I turned to look at everyone else. “Holy shi t, spider monkey, they’re black now.”

“It’s her warning system,” Adrik said, laughing.

“No shi t,” Misha said. “What were they saying, gazelle?”

“Wait, she can understand Spanish now?” Stephen asked, completely confused. “That’s impressive for a mere human brain.”

Andrei laughed. “Martin apparently knows Italian. I assumed he was using a translator for her texts, but he was speaking Italian almost the whole time we saw him.”

“Unexpected from the du mbest Colombian to ever walk the earth,” Ivan said.

“He’s still vacillating between semi-smart and du mb as f**k. His plan for Giana is actually pretty solid. I did not expect such strategy from him,” 1

said.

Ivan was thinking over what I’d just said, running his hand over his goatee the whole time. He looked at me and I could see him

figure out his plan. I grinned at him, knowing he’d nailed it. “He’s going to have Giana fake an illness to get her out of the building

He can get to her away from the building,” he said.

“Winner winner chicken dinner,” I said “She’s supposed to take being in so much pain that they have to take her to the ER. He’s either going to grab her en route or at the hospital.”

“What about his last conversation” Misha asked.

I looked at Misha, somewhat amused that he didn't want to be the one to say it. "Co ward," I said. His wide smile stretched across his face and he eagerly agreed with me.

"Who was he talking to Viktor asked.

"Sal," Andrei and I said at the same time.

"WHAT!" Adrik asked, his level of anger now completely overtaking mine, but also feeding into mine. I was secretly happy I wouldn't need to worry about my eyes for the foreseeable future. I turned to him, putting my hands on his chest, helping to keep him calm.

"Thi

actually quite helpful, if you think about it. It was the missing piece.

Everything is now connected nicely," I said, smiling up at him and loving the fire that was building in both of us. We were about to unleash chaps,